

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE December 28, 2004

Senators vow to keep fighting despite governor's

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LANSING – Sens. Patty Birkholz and Cameron S. Brown expressed their disappointment over today's veto of legislation that would have established a Recycling Advisory Council and statewide recycling coordinator.

attempt to short-circuit recycling in Michigan

Senate Bill 854, sponsored by Birkholz, would have established the position of statewide recycling coordinator under Michigan law to help develop the statewide recycling plan, among other duties. The position already exists in the Department of Environmental Quality, but this legislation made the position permanent via statute.

"We worked diligently with Senate and House members and staff on both sides of the aisle to develop this legislation to help local communities begin or expand recycling efforts," said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. "This package represents the first step to increase Michigan's pitiful recycling rate. The governor may have set us two steps backward today, but we're not giving up."

Senate Bill 790, sponsored by Brown, R-Fawn River Township, would have created a Recycling Advisory Council to help develop a comprehensive statewide recycling program.

"Michigan has one of the worst recycling rates in the nation, largely due to the lack of a coordinated statewide recycling plan," Brown said. "This legislation would have begun the process of implementing a comprehensive plan to improve our dismal performance. But unfortunately, the governor chose to veto these bills that would have benefited Michigan's environment and Michigan families."

The governor vetoed the bills but called for additional fees and an expansion of the state's bottle deposit law. However, according to the Recycling Task Force chaired by Brown and Birkholz, Michigan has one of the worst recycling rates in the nation despite its expansive bottle-deposit laws. The task force report also indicated that expanding the bottle-deposit law may actually be detrimental to recycling efforts. SBs 790 and 854 addressed two of the recommendations made by the Recycling Task Force.

"A key part of this legislation was to develop a fair funding mechanism but it's important to note that our attempts at working with the Department of Environmental Quality were not productive," Birkholz said. "Just because the governor has never met a fee increase she doesn't like, that should not stand in the way of other components for improving recycling in Michigan."